

Guide to style

What does writing for the Orwell Youth Prize mean? What are we looking for?

You can write in any **form** you want. George Orwell was a journalist, essayist, even a sometime poet. He reviewed books and broadcast on the radio. Orwell wrote short stories, memoirs and, of course, novels. He even called *Animal Farm* 'a fairy story'. So, write what you like!

A few main principles lay behind most of his work, what we might call the 'spirit' of his writing.

- **Research.** Orwell made sure he was well informed.
- **Experience.** He travelled widely to find out what it was like, say, to labour on a farm or wash dishes in a hotel kitchen. But he didn't have to; he also wrote about the small things in ordinary life.
- **Improving Society.** Orwell wanted to highlight injustices in society and to right the wrongs of our often unequal and inhumane world.
- **Transparency.** Orwell had strong views about how to write. He distrusted unnecessary complication and especially objected to language being used to avoid facing the truth of difficult topics. His 'rules' were intended to ensure that writing was clear and easily understood and they included:
 - I. Never use a long word where a short one will do;
 - II. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out;
 - III. Try not to use a cliché, a scientific word, or jargon if you can explain what you want to say in everyday English.



So, when you write for the Orwell Youth Prize, do it in the spirit of George Orwell:

- think about a social or political issue which you want to explore
- use your own words, presented clearly and concisely
- seek to make your audience think and feel.

Thanks for reading!